

# SUBJECT-VERB INVERSION IN DECLARATIVE- EXCLAMATIVE SENTENCES IN THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

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## Abstract

In this paper, I will analyze the semantic and pragmatic properties of the Subject-Verb Inversion (SVI) that occurs in Portuguese sentences such as *Comprou a Joana a camisola para não a usar!*<sup>1</sup> or *Gosto eu de morangos e tu não me dás nenhum!*<sup>2</sup>. In these kinds of sentences, the canonic order of a simple declarative sentence – SVO – changes to VSO, and the resultant meaning is not simplistic, as that change gives a simultaneous modal and assertive content to the sentence.

It is argued that this syntactic inversion influences the semantics of the sentence. With the use of SVO canonic order, the sentence would be a mere description of the world, but with the VSO order, and with a specific exclamatory intonation, the sentence acquires a subjective feature which reveals an implicit comment, i.e. the expression of a speaker's attitude. At the same time, new information is introduced about what is being commented on. Therefore, SVI modalizes the speech and gives these sentences properties that are both exclamative and declarative.

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<sup>1</sup> For all examples given, a gloss with direct word correspondence will be provided, followed by a possible translation with the aim of conveying and explaining the Portuguese meaning of the sentence. For this particular sentence, we have:

Bought Joana the shirt for not to wear it.

'Joana bought the shirt, but now she doesn't wear it.' (Joana should wear the shirt, since she bought it!)

<sup>2</sup> Like I strawberries and you are eating them all!

'I like strawberries, but you are eating them all alone!' (That is not right. You should offer me a strawberry, since I like them so much.)

**Keywords:** Subject-Verb Inversion, Declarative-exclamative sentence, Discursive modalization, Assertiveness.

## 1. Introduction

Subject-Verb Inversion (SVI) has been considerably analyzed in grammar literature regarding the Portuguese language, and is mainly considered as a syntactic process of change (or movement) in the basic sentence structure. Authors like Ambar (1992), Costa (2004) and others have analyzed and schematized several constructions in which Portuguese syntax allows or demands the change of Subject and Verb order in a sentence. This shows that, most of the time, the syntactic structure of specific sentences such as interrogative forms or structures with preposed constituents, among many others, is particularly characterized by this change.

The aim of the present work is to analyze and to problematize, mostly semantically and pragmatically (although without ignoring the syntactic point of view), a specific context of Subject-Verb Inversion (SVI) in European Portuguese. The analysis will focus particularly on the meaning of this kind of construction, in order to explain that its form (VSO) is a consequence of particular semantic and pragmatic features in the sentence (such as the speaker's intentions or meaningful nuances).

I will analyse sentences such as (1), mainly from created data, taking into account the importance of linguistic intuition as a variable. Notice that these kinds of structures have not yet been studied in literature (which has been more focused on non-assertive, less simple and well-marked SVI contexts).

(1) a. Comi eu o chocolate e afinal havia bolo!

Ate I the chocolate and after-all there-was cake!

'I ate the chocolate, but there was cake after all!' (I should not have eaten the chocolate, because there was cake, which I prefer).

b. Comprou a Joana a camisola para agora não a usar!

Bought the Joana the shirt for now not it to-wear!

'Joana bought the shirt, but now she does not wear it!' (This should not be the case. She should wear it, since she bought it!)

In the above, the Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) order seems to be clearly influenced by matters of semantics and pragmatics, since the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) order that would be expected in the corresponding

simple declarative sentence is here altered, giving it a new (mainly exclamatory) pragmatic status.

The analysis of these SVI cases will lead to a questioning of several concepts concerning the clauses it integrates, with regard to the sentence type or speech act, the basic order concept, verb types and verb tenses used, the type of subject, and the role of meaning systems (such as reference, definiteness, or modality) in the syntactic structure. This will demonstrate the interaction between syntax and semantics justifying the inversion studied here.

After a brief presentation of other contexts in which Portuguese allows a Subject-Verb Inversion, this work will present a more profound analysis of this specific case of SVI. It will be shown that the inverted order is actually due to semantic and pragmatic issues that determine the type of verbs, subjects, and clausal contexts in which this process can be observed.

## 2. Other contexts of Subject-Verb Inversion in Portuguese

Regarding the inversion process, it is important to first highlight that the basic order of Portuguese sentences is the one less marked in tone or intentionality. Therefore, the one easily accepted by any native Portuguese speaker as the canonic order for a simple declarative sentence is Subject-Verb-Object (SVO)<sup>3</sup>. The inversion analyzed here will have this canonic order as its primary basis, but it will focus only on the subject<sup>4</sup> and verb of a sentence, without any change of the position of the object: the object will remain, in most cases, in the third position.

In Portuguese, there is a group of clausal contexts where the SVO order is naturally altered to VSO without resulting in any

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<sup>3</sup> Notice that, as Ambar (1992, 22) states, the combination of elements S(subject) – V(erb) – O(bject) may always produce, mathematically and abstractly, six possible orders: SVO, VSO, SOV, OSV, OVS and VOS. The basic order will be given by one of these six hypotheses, the one that happens without the need for any special syntactic, semantic, phonetical, morphological or pragmatic elements to be legitimized by a speaker.

<sup>4</sup> “Subject” is here considered by taking into account the considerations of Brito and Duarte (1980), as a syntactic function that is applied to a sentence’s constituent (typically they are nominal phrases or clauses) due to semantic-pragmatic issues. The subject of a sentence will be the argument of the predication which, being mandatory, is semantically related to the predicator; it is “‘the starting point’ for the state of affairs expressed by a certain predication” (Brito e Duarte 1980, 225 – author’s translation). Consequently, the subject determines the verbal agreement of the sentence, and it is the preferential controller for inter or intra-clausal coreferentiality.

ungrammaticality, and this inversion is even mandatory sometimes. This group, which has been substantially described (cf. Ambar 1992), implies constructions such as interrogative structures, question-answer contexts, parentheticals, contexts of focused preposed constituents, infinitive structures, Subjunctive structures, participle structures, and ergative/unaccusative or even passive constructions. The syntactic characteristics of all of these justify choosing the VSO order instead of the canonic SVO order.

Although the analysis or revision of these contexts does not fall within the scope of this paper, there are five cases that can be pointed out in which the inversion is not only justified by syntactic reasons, but it is also justified by semantic-pragmatic properties, bringing them closer to the contexts analyzed in this study. According to Ambar's (1992) scheme, these are cases of closed interrogatives or yes/no questions (cf. 2), of a type of dependent infinitive structure (cf. 3), independent Subjunctive structures (cf. 4a), subordinated Subjunctive structures without the connector "se" [if] (cf. 4b/4c), correction of a previous statement contexts (cf. 5), and contexts of preposed contrastive focus (cf. 6)<sup>5</sup>, which have been commented on by Costa and Martins (2010).

- (2) a. Irá o Pedro ao cinema?

Will-go the Pedro to-the cinema?

'Will Pedro go to the cinema?'

- b. Terias tu tomado outra atitude?<sup>5</sup>

Would-have you taken another attitude?

'Would you have done something else?'

- (3) Dizeres-me tu a verdade!<sup>6</sup>

Telling-me you the truth!

'As if you are ever going to tell me the truth!'

- (4) a. Digam eles a verdade!

Tell they the truth!

'Let them tell the truth!'

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<sup>5</sup> In these cases, there is an object movement, since it is preposed to the verb, causing an OVS order. However, what remains relevant to this study is that the verb still comes before the subject.

<sup>5</sup> Examples from Ambar (1992, 64-65)

<sup>6</sup> Examples from Ambar (1992, 89)

- b. Tivesse eu tempo e havias de ver como tudo corria bem.  
Had I time, and [you] would-see how everything would-go well.  
'Had I the time, and you would see how everything would work out.'
- c. Estudasse o Pedro um pouco mais e verias como ele é brilhante.<sup>7</sup>  
Had-studied the Pedro a little more and [you] would-see how he is brilliant.  
'Had Pedro studied a little harder and you would see how brilliant he is.'

- (5) A: Ninguém comeu a sopa.  
No-one ate the soup.

B: Comeu o João a sopa.<sup>8</sup>  
Ate the João the soup.  
'João ate the soup.'

- (6) a. Isso queria o escritor.  
That wanted the writer.  
'It was that what the writer wished.'

b. Uma melancia inteira me comeu aquele bruto.<sup>9</sup>  
A watermelon whole me ate that beast.  
'That beast ate all of my watermelon.'

In all of these cases, the inversion is not determined by a syntactic element like the *wh*-constituent, as happens in other SVI cases. Instead, there are specific semantic-pragmatic features that justify the canonic SVO order not being applied, such as the verb tenses or verb moods used (Future, Conditional or Subjunctive), and, of course, the order inversion.

The sentences of (2), with Future or Conditional and inversion, are not mere questions, because the speaker seems to have doubts concerning a state of affairs, and s/he is not only asking for information. As Ambar (1992) points out, these questions express a speaker's attitude because the verb tense and mood, as well as the verb's position, indicate that "the speaker does not wait for a categorical yes/no answer from the listener: instead, he expresses doubt about a particular state of affairs, seeking the confirmation or disconfirmation of his hypothesis" (Ambar 1992, 66 –

<sup>7</sup> Examples from de Ambar (1992, 102, 106)

<sup>8</sup> Examples from Costa (2004, 124)

<sup>9</sup> Examples from Costa and Martins (2010)

author's translation). The pre-subject verb position will have a modality that overcomes its most basic and broader meaning, and the speaker will be forced to select verb tenses with broader modal features that assist the construction of the discursive context intended. If the question were a simple request for information, the SV order would be perfectly acceptable – *O Pedro irá ao cinema?* ['Will Pedro go to the cinema?'], or *A Joana gostaria de ir ao cinema?* ['Would Joana like to go to the cinema?'] –, notwithstanding the fact that these verb tenses are not the most usual in a native speaker's day-to-day routine: the most usual would be *O Pedro vai ao cinema?* ['Is Pedro going to the cinema?'] and *A Joana gostava de ir ao cinema?* ['Would Joana like to go to the cinema?']<sup>10</sup>. However, if a discursive intention, like doubt, is grammaticalized, modalizing the question, it will be more common for the native speaker to choose the VSO order.

The same attitude's grammaticalization can be observed in sentences (3) and (4). Ambar (1992) shows that they are expressive speech acts (according to Searle's (1969) terminology), because they contain a null modal operator (which is not produced phonetically, and being implicit), which explains why these sentences are modalized: they express the speaker's intention. In (3), placing the subject after the verb leads to an implied evaluation of the proposition's truth value: there is a certain discredit concerning the truthfulness of the proposition, taking into account that there is at least one possible world where the proposition is not considered true or truthful. So, a comment such as "it is not possible that *p*" or "I do not agree that *p*" becomes implicit. In (4), the modality which is generally associated with the Subjunctive mood is connected with the SVI, and this creates sentences that are not simple assertive predications: in (4a) there is an imperative intention, as clear as the conditional intention of (4b). In (4b), the consideration of a possible world (the implicit value of *se* [if]) is shown not only by using the Subjunctive, but also through the inversion of the verb and subject order, so that, when the conjunction is explicit, the SVO order is accepted again (*Se eu tivesse tempo, havias de ver como tudo corria bem* ['If I had the time, you would see how everything would work out.']). The same happens with the example (4c).

<sup>10</sup> In Portuguese, there are two different constructions that can be translated to "would Joana like to go": 'A Joana *gostaria* de ir' and 'A Joana *gostava* de ir'. The former corresponds to the regular present conditional in English, but the second, which is called the 'pretérito imperfeito' (past imperfect), does not really exist in English. In Portuguese, both these forms have the same meaning in this kind of interrogative sentence.

On the other hand, in sentences (5) and (6) the inversion semantically and pragmatically marks an attitude of opposition or contradiction regarding an expectation. That expectation may be presented in an explicit proposition, as is the case in (5), or may be implicit, as is the case in (6). These are cases of informational focus that add new information and express an attitude at the same time.

To sum up, these five cases are examples of Portuguese contexts in which VSO order might be used to form sentences where the semantics includes issues of not only reference and predication, but also discursive modalization, sharing features with those described in this work.

### 3. Subject-Verb Inversion in declarative-exclamative sentences: semantic-pragmatic properties

This paper's object of study comprehends a type of SVI structures that has not yet been deeply analyzed in the grammar literature (cf. Martins 2010). They do not directly relate (at least not in their syntactic structure) to the contexts described before (cf. section 1), except in what concerns the studied semantic-pragmatic process of inversion. These are sentences such as the paradigmatic examples from (7) to (13): they all have an SVI which endows them with an exclamatory and modalized character, and so they become a kind of a speaker's comment.

- (7) a. *Comi eu o bolo e (afinal) o jantar estava pronto!*  
 Ate I the cake and (after-all) the dinner was ready!  
 'I ate the cake but (after all) the dinner was ready!' (I should not have eaten the cake because that spoiled my appetite for dinner.)
- b. *Comi eu o bolo quando o jantar estava pronto!*  
 Ate I the cake when the dinner was ready!  
 'I ate the cake when after all the dinner was ready!'
- c. *Comeu a Rita o bolo e (afinal) o jantar está pronto!*  
 Ate the Rita the cake and (after-all) the dinner is ready!  
 'Rita ate the cake but (after all) the dinner is ready!'
- (8) a. *Expliquei-lhe eu tantas vezes o caminho e (ainda assim) ela perdeu-se!*  
 Explained-her I so-many times the way and (even so) she got-lost!

‘I explained the way to her so many times but, even so, she got lost!’ (She was not supposed to get lost, as I explained the way to her so many times.)

b. *Disse-me a Joana* o nome da rua onde mora e eu esqueci-me!  
Told-me the Joana the name of-the street where [she] lives and I forgot [it]!

‘Joana told me the name of the street where she lives, but I still forgot it!’ (I should not have forgotten the street name, as Joana told it to me so many times.)

c. *Almoço eu* todos os dias no mesmo restaurante e hoje está fechado!

Lunch I every-day at the-same restaurant and today [it] is closed!

‘I lunch every day at the same restaurant but today it is closed!’ (It should not be closed, as I go there every day.)

d. *Pediu o rapaz* um café e o empregado trouxe-lhe um sumo de laranja!

Asked-for the boy a coffee and the waiter brought-him an orange-juice!

‘The boy asked for a coffee, but the waiter brought him an orange juice!’ (The waiter should have brought the coffee, since that is what the boy asked for.)

(9) a. *Gosto eu* de morangos e tu estás a comê-los todos!

Like I of strawberries and you are eating-them all!

‘I like strawberries, but you are eating them all alone!’ (That is not right. You should offer me a strawberry, since I like them so much.)

b. *Gosto eu* de morangos e tu não me dás nenhum!

Like I strawberries and you not me give any!

‘I like strawberries, but you are not offering me any!’

(10) a. *Queria eu falar* contigo e tu foste-te embora!/?

Wanted I to-talk with-you and you left!/?

‘I wanted to talk to you, but you left!/?’ (That is not right. You should have stayed to talk to me.)

b. *Fui eu* até Lisboa para tu não estares lá!/?

Went I to Lisbon for you not to-be there!/?



‘I went to Lisbon, but you were not there!/?’ (You should have been in Lisbon, since I went there.)

- c. *Comprei-te eu* a camisola amarela e tu agora preferes uma azul!/?  
 Bought-you I the shirt yellow and you now prefer a blue [one]!/?  
 ‘I bought you the yellow shirt but now you prefer a blue one!/?’ (I got annoyed, because you should prefer the shirt I bought you, and not another one.)
- (11) a. *Está um belo dia de sol e estou eu* aqui na biblioteca a estudar!  
 [It]-is a beautiful day of sun and am I here in-the library studying!  
 ‘It is a beautiful sunny day, and yet here I am in the library studying!’ (I feel sad being in the library, because I would prefer to be somewhere else enjoying the beautiful day.)
- b. *Estou eu* em casa enquanto os outros estão na praia!  
 Am I at home while the others are at-the beach!  
 ‘I am at home while the others are at the beach!’ (I feel sad because I would prefer to be at the beach with the others, not at home.)
- c. *Convidou-me o Diogo* para irmos passear e eu hoje tenho que trabalhar!  
 Asked-me the Diogo to go for-a-walk and I today have to work!  
 ‘Diogo asked me to go for a walk with him, but today I have to work!’ (I regret it, since I would prefer to go for a walk with Diogo, but I cannot because of work.)
- d. *Comprei eu* um carro velho quando o carro mais novo estava em promoção!  
 Bought I a car old when the car newer was on sale!  
 ‘I bought an old car, but the newer was on sale!’ (I should have bought the newer one; I regret buying the old one.)
- (12) a. *Estudei eu* tanto para só sair metade da matéria no teste!  
 Studied I so-much for only to-get-out half of-the topics in-the exam!  
 ‘I studied so hard, but only half of the topics were in the exam!’
- b. *Fui eu* a Paris para o Museu do Louvre estar fechado!  
 Went I to Paris for the Museum of Louvre to-be closed!

‘I went to Paris, but the Louvre Museum was closed!’ (I feel sad because I wanted the museum to be open so that I could visit it.)

c. *Deu-lhe a mãe um casaco novo para ele o perder no dia seguinte!*  
Gave-him the mother a jacket new for him it to-lose on-the day next!

‘His mother gave him a new jacket, but he lost it the next day!’ (He should not have lost a new jacket!)

(13) a. *Vais tu passear e eu estudar!*

Will you go-for-a-walk and I [will go] to-study!

‘You are going for a walk, but I have to go study!’ (I would prefer to go for a walk with you instead of having to study.)

b. *Comeste tu um belo jantar e eu tive que comer fast food!*

Ate you a great dinner and I had to eat fast food!

‘You ate a great dinner, but I had to eat fast food!’ (That is unpleasant, because I would prefer to eat a great dinner instead of fast food.)

As we can observe, in these examples, the aforementioned inversion is present, but there is no explicit or specific syntactic factor (such as a verb tense or mood, for example) to define it. The SVI seems to justify itself in the resultant pragmatic and semantic properties: the codification of the meaning of these sentences resorts to their illocutionary value – because they have a somewhat assertive-declarative character –, and it also alludes to the speaker’s cognitive state when s/he produces the sentence. These sentences are not only informational, but they also represent the speaker’s attitude. Thus, they are neither simple declarations or assertions, nor just comments or presentations of a speaker’s attitude; their semantics adjoins the concepts of Modality, or more specifically of Modalization, and of Assertiveness. The SVI allows them to be descriptions of the world and also comments on the facts described.

The partially modal character of sentences with this kind of SVI is the most relevant aspect in their interpretation. Their pragmatic features justify the recovering of Palmer’s theoretical frame (1986, 16), where modality is taken as “the grammaticalization of the speaker’s (subjective) attitudes and opinions,” because these sentences are in fact several types of comments: a lamentation, a complaint, an opinion, or even judgment values, depending on the sentence or context that they enfold. This means that the SVI process we are studying apparently attributes some modal properties to the

sentences it forms, since it is this specific subject-verb order inversion that grammaticalizes the speaker's attitude when facing a state of affairs.

It could, therefore, be considered that there is some kind of implicit modality<sup>11</sup> in these sentences, since the speaker's attitude is not produced objectively, grammatically, and lexically (as would happen if there was a verb or a modal adverb). Their interpretation is clearly dependent on the pragmatic context in which they are produced as well as on the listener's ability to understand the speaker's cognitive state (which exists, although is not expressed). However, this might not be such a pure covert modality as Bhatt (1999, 15) presents it, because what happens here is a discursive modalization process that is perfectly perceivable. The SVI is not a typically modal construction such as a modal adverb, but it is a syntactic strategy that represents the speaker's evaluation of the proposition; in other words, it lexicalizes the fact that the sentence is not a declarative or informational assertion, but is in particular a comment on a certain situation. This discursive modalization process has an implicative reading, since there is an implicit comment which clearly involves modality, and which could be evaluated according to its evaluative, deontic, or epistemic features.

This type of modality of the implicit comment **defines and depends** on the intention the speaker grammaticalizes through it. In contexts where sentences are criticisms or value judgments (cf. (7), (8), (9), (10)) the modality will seem deontic, since the criticism seems to presuppose an evaluation of the subject concerning the "correct/incorrect" parameter; but in cases where they constitute a lamentation, a complaint or an opinion (cf. (11), (12), (13)), the sentences are closer to what Rescher (1968) called "evaluative modality", because their interpretation is easily determined by the parameter "being good that *p*/ being bad that *p*". Since in both cases the evaluation is extremely subjective, the concept of deonticity followed here is based on Palmer (1986) and Kratzer (1991), as a rigorous consideration of specific moral or behavior rules, but it is applied in the context where the speaker defines "should not" as non-compliance with specific moral or attitudinal rules inside his/her own set of moral values, and inside the set of accessible worlds in the conversation.

However, it is hard to assertively attribute a type of modality to these sentences, as their intention can shift according to the pragmatic context in which they occur. This means that the same sentence could be, in one context, a lamentation (closer to evaluative modality), and, in another

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<sup>11</sup> Here the concept of "covert modality" has been adopted, as proposed by Bhatt (1999, 15): "Covert Modality is modality which we interpret but which is not associated with any lexical item in the structure that we are interpreting."

context, a criticism (more deontic). Let us analyze the sentence (10c), once again:

- (10) c. Comprei-te eu a camisola amarela e tu agora preferes uma azul!/?  
 Bought-you I the shirt yellow and you now prefer a blue [one]!/?  
 ‘I bought you the yellow shirt but now you prefer a blue one!/?’

The implicit comment of this sentence is pragmatically ambiguous, since it can have an evaluative character, as a kind of a complaint which is paraphrasable by “*é desagradável que p*” [it is unpleasant that *p*], as well as it can have a more deontic and critical aspect, taking into consideration the behavioural rules of the world considered by the speaker to be disrespected, and so is paraphrasable as “*não deves p*” [you should not *p*]. Therefore, if *p* is the proposition *preferir uma camisola azul* [to prefer a blue shirt], then the implicit comment of this sentence can be paraphrasable either by *É desagradável que prefiras uma camisola azul quando eu te comprei a camisola amarela* [‘It is unpleasant that you prefer the blue shirt when I bought you a yellow one’] or by *Não deves preferir uma camisola azul quando eu te dei a camisola amarela* [‘You should not prefer the blue shirt since I offered you a yellow one’].

Obviously, some of these examples are pragmatically more prone to a certain type of interpretation (or modality). This is the case of examples (11a) or (11b) that would not make much sense as deontic criticisms or judgment values. It would be strange if someone criticized oneself (thinking about not following some rules) by being in the library studying on a beautiful sunny day, or by staying at home while the others were at the beach. Therefore, the modality of the implicit comments in the analyzed sentences can either be evaluative or deontic, depending on the linguistic and pragmatic contexts in which they are uttered. The concepts of *implicature* (or implicative reading), *inference*, or *presupposition*, are gathered here with the concept of *covert modality*, because the interpretation of these sentences, with no more than a change in the syntactic order, will depend on conversational interaction, in order for the listener to understand (or presuppose) what type of attitude the speaker has towards the proposition. This will enable an understanding of what is semantically and pragmatically implied by the syntactic order switch to VSO. All the pragmatic elements that contextualize the conversation

contribute to that happening, such as common knowledge, the listener's interpretative ability, and the modal basis of the uttered sentence<sup>12</sup>.

At this point, it seems important to remember the concept of "ordering source", also presented by Kratzer (1991). This relates to one of the most important features of this type of SVI structures, namely its contrastive character. In fact, these constructions always involve an element (or a proposition) that contrasts with another (proposition). In the sentence *Comi eu o bolo e afinal o jantar estava pronto* (7a), the true critique (or lamentation) the speaker makes is expressed in the proposition *comi eu o bolo* [ate I the cake] – in which there is an inversion –, and that attitude exists because of the other proposition – *e afinal o jantar estava pronto* [and after all the dinner was ready] –, with which it actually contrasts.

This idea of contrast between two propositions demands firstly that both participants in the conversation – speaker and listener – assume both propositions as realities that can be contrasted according to one or several values and under diverse conditions. As such, the concept of "ordering source" presented by Kratzer (as a gradual consideration of the possible accessible worlds in a conversation, in relation to approaching an ideal<sup>13</sup>) shows that this contrast is mutually interpreted (giving inversion a meaning) because both participants in the discussion agree (directly or indirectly) with a certain ideal world, according to the comment made.

In sentences that express a lamentation, such as the ones in (11) and (12), inversion is the result of an evaluation, generally critical and negative, of the situation presented by the proposition – to be at the library studying (11a), to stay at home (11b), to have to work (11c), to buy an old car (11d), the test being about only half of the studied matter (12a), the Louvre Museum being closed when the subject went to Paris (12b), or having lost the new jacket his mother gave him (12c). That situation is compared to an implicit situation that would be ideal – taking a stroll or enjoying a sunny day (11a), being at the beach with friends (11b), taking a walk with Diogo (11c), buying a new car (11d), the test being about all the studied topics (12a), the Louvre being open (12b), and not losing the new jacket (12c). For that to happen, the explicit circumstances are taken in consideration – a beautiful sunny day, friends at the beach, a new car on sale, the test with only half the studied topics, the closed Louvre, and the

<sup>12</sup> According to Kratzer's (1991) concept, "modal basis" is here understood as the group of propositions that can constitute the epistemic or evidential informational basis of a certain evaluation, of a certain comment.

<sup>13</sup> "For each world, the second conversational background induces an *ordering* on the set of worlds accessible from that world. It functions as the **ordering source**" (Kratzer 1991, 644 – highlighted by the author)

brand new jacket offered by the mother. To interpret correctly the intention behind the inversion, we then need the ideal world to be common knowledge, and both the speaker and the listener to consider the described situations as ideal, or, at least, for the listener to know how the speaker considers them to be. Only in this way can there be a common evaluation, and the inversion might really be able to imply an attitude of disapproval as well as a comment with the meaning of an adverb like *infelizmente* [unfortunately].

The same happens in other examples. The sentence (9b)<sup>14</sup>, for example, will only be interpreted correctly if both the discursive participants consider an ideal world as that in which the person eating strawberries offers one to someone who is watching him/her and who really likes them, with it being unpleasant or even incorrect if that does not occur. In sentences (13)<sup>15</sup>, the contrastive character is even stronger since the speaker regrets the situation precisely because it contrasts with another: s/he firstly presents and emphasizes (through SVI) the situation that is the positive pole of contrast, so that s/he can then present the proposition for which s/he is truly sorry. What can be noticed in these contexts is the relevance of shared social conventions in the *ordering source* taken into consideration; the negative idea towards fast food is a good example of a conventional and social idea that, even if the listener does not agree with, must be recognized by him/her. Only if the listener recognizes it can we know which idea is shared by the speaker in the utterance of (13b). And even if it is not acknowledged *a priori* that the speaker has a negative idea about eating fast food, the listener will have that information the moment the sentence is uttered with SVI. This ends up showing the speaker's opinion on eating fast food but also about fast food itself. Furthermore, this latter idea has to be shared as a social convention, and the listener has to acknowledge it too, so that s/he can understand the attitude behind the subject-verb inversion.

As I said before, the semantics of these clauses with subject-verb inversion is not confined to its modalizing feature. They are not simple expressive speech acts – mere lamentations, mere criticisms, etc. Actually, if we follow Panzeri's (2003) definition of *assertion* as a proposition that adds new information to the speech, increasing the common knowledge between participants in a conversation, it can be assumed that this type of

<sup>14</sup> (9b) Gosto eu de morangos e tu não me dás nenhum!

<sup>15</sup> (13) a. Vais tu passear e eu estudar!

b. Comeste tu um belo jantar e eu tive que comer *fast food*!

c. Teve a Maria 20 no teste e eu tive apenas 10!

construction also has a stronger assertive character, as it too presents the facts that are commented upon.

The already debated presence of a contrastive clause is the most revealing factor of this assertiveness; it presents a situation that ends up being the modal basis, or the reason, of the discursive modalization that characterizes the clause containing the inversion. This means that the sentences from (7) to (13) are not only expressions of a critical or remorseful attitude by the speaker, but they are also ways of giving new information: the speaker uses them not only to inform the listener about what happened and what originated this attitude, but also as a comment on it. S/he presents a true fact of the world, opposing it to another that is generally true in his/her personal experience and that is the target of the evaluation (which is mostly negative). This is the reason why the inverted sentence would be strange by itself, without a proposition (implicit or explicit) with which it would contrast: it seems somehow incomplete just to say *Comi eu o bolo!* [Ate I the cake!]. We feel the need for something more (either contextually or linguistically) to understand the sentence's meaning.

Given this, it seems appropriate to state that we are dealing with sentences that are simultaneously representative speech acts (in Searle's (1969) terminology), i.e., assertions or assertive statements, and expressive speech acts, that is, comments (expressions of a speaker's attitudes) that modalize the speech. Their meaning gathers assertiveness (they introduce new information in speech and they are even analyzable through its truth value) and modality or discursive modalization (whence we try to understand if it is a case of epistemic, deontic, or some other kind of modality). The proof that this feature is a result of inversion rests on the fact that the same sentences, those of examples (7) to (13), would not be interpreted as comments, and would only be interpreted as assertions or declarations, if they did not have the inversion commented on here (and, of course, the necessary intonation). Some examples of that can be observed in (14):

- (14) a. Eu comi o bolo e/mas afinal o jantar está pronto.  
'I ate the cake and/but after all dinner is ready.'
- b. Eu expliquei-lhe tantas vezes o caminho e/mas (ainda assim) ela perdeu-se.  
'I explained the way to her so many times and/but (nevertheless) she still got lost.'

c. A Joana disse-me o nome da rua onde mora e/mas eu esqueci-me.

‘Joana told me the name of the street where she lives and/but I forgot it.’

d. Eu almoço todos os dias no mesmo restaurante e/mas hoje está fechado.

‘I lunch every day at the same restaurant and/but today it is closed.’

e. O rapaz pediu um café e/mas o empregado trouxe-lhe um sumo de laranja.

‘The boy asked for a coffee and/but the waiter brought him an orange juice.’

f. Eu gosto de morangos e/mas tu não me dás nenhum.

‘I like strawberries and/but you are not offering me any.’

h. Está um belo dia de sol e/mas eu estou aqui na biblioteca a estudar.

‘It is a beautiful sunny day and/but here I am in the library studying.’

i. Eu estou em casa enquanto os outros estão na praia.

‘I am at home while the others are at the beach.’

j. O Diogo convidou-me para irmos passear e/mas eu hoje tenho que trabalhar.

Diogo asked me to go for a walk with him and/but today I have to work.

k. Eu estudei tanto mas só saíu metade da matéria no teste.

‘I studied so hard, but only half of the topics were appeared in the exam!’

l. Tu comeste um belo jantar e/mas eu tive que comer fast food.

‘You ate a great dinner and/but I had to eat fast food.’

m. Eu queria falar contigo e/mas tu foste-te embora.

‘I wanted to talk with you and/but you left.’



Here, the use of the dot instead of the exclamation mark used in examples (7) to (13) shows that the exclamation mark in SVI sentences represents the way they are prosodically and pragmatically produced – expressing the speaker's attitude. On the other hand, when there is no inversion, sentences are interpreted as statements, used in a context in which someone would just narrate a situation, for example.

The possibility of the use of *mas* [but] can be noticed in a sentence with no inversion (cf. 14), in opposition to the ungrammaticality or peculiarity of the use of an adversative connector in a sentence with SVI (cf. 15):

- (15) a. ?/\* *Comi eu o bolo mas o jantar está pronto!*  
Ate I the cake but the dinner is ready!
- b. ?/\* *Expliquei-lhe eu tantas vezes o caminho mas ela perdeu-se!*  
Explained her I so many times the way but she got lost!
- c. ?/\* *Pedi o rapaz um café mas o empregado trouxe-lhe um sumo de laranja!*  
Asked the boy for a coffee but the waiter brought him an orange juice!
- d. ?/\* *Gosto eu de morangos mas tu estás a comê-los todos!*  
Like I strawberries but you are eating them all!
- e. ?/\* *Estou eu em casa mas os outros estão na praia!*  
Am I at home but the others are at the beach!
- f. ?/\* *Fui eu a Paris mas o Museu do Louvre estava fechado!*  
Went I to Paris but the Louvre Museum was closed!
- g. ?/\* *Vais tu passear mas eu estudar!*  
Will you go for a walk but I will study!
- h. ?/\* *Queria eu falar contigo mas tu foste-te embora!/?*  
Wanted I to talk with you but you left!/?

These sentences are less familiar, since their acceptability is more restricted. The strangeness of there being a connector in a sentence with inversion proves that the SVI process is itself the linguistic strategy that

specifically establishes the contrastive, and yet factive, feature of this sentence's semantics. This process provides an adversative value to the sentence it forms, competing with the presence of a lexical operator with the same value, to give rise to a repetition or redundancy that would sound unfamiliar to the speaker. In this way, the “e” [and] that generally links the two clauses is an indicator of its assertiveness: it seems to be both a copulative and adversative conjunction, because it conjugates the situation of two propositions (as stated before, these propositions have a truth value and describe states or affairs of the world), and it also may be used to contrast those same situations. After all, this contrast is the essence of the speaker's propositional attitude in a sentence with this type of inversion. The conjugation of copulative and adversative features that characterize it is thus further evidence that the semantics of sentences with this SVI enfold assertiveness and discursive modalization.

It can also be observed that the verb tenses and moods employed are those typically used in assertive contexts (the “reality moods”), and not those used for modal contexts such as the Subjunctive, the Conditional, or even the Future. The sentences from (16) are odd, or, at least, the contexts in which they are used or their usual pragmatic roles are not relevant for this paper:

- (16) a. ?? *Coma eu o bolo e o jantar esteja pronto!*  
Eat I the cake and the dinner is ready!
- b. ?? *Comeria eu o bolo e o jantar estaria pronto!*  
Would-eat I the cake and the dinner would-be ready!
- c. ?? *Comerei eu o bolo e o jantar estará pronto!*  
Will-eat I the cake and the dinner will-be ready!

The use of verb tenses or moods referring to possible worlds (worlds that do not necessarily have a referent in the “real world”) seems to be unacceptable because these sentences are actually comments on facts or situations from the real world (a world that the sentence itself presents us, as seen above), and not regarding any hypothesis or possibility; so much so that we need to display a temporal coherence (almost narrative) among the situations denoted. For instance, it would not make sense that the sentence (8a) was the other way around – ??# *Perdeu-se ela e eu expliquei-*

*lhe tantas vezes o caminho!*<sup>16</sup> – because there is a clear temporal and causal line between the two propositions which implies that the action of *explicar tantas vezes o caminho* [explaining the way so many times] is prior to *ela perder-se* [her getting lost]; otherwise, the critique uttered would be pragmatically odd.

Furthermore, the properties of the subjects found in these post-verbal position contexts also point to the need for a specific reference that shows that these sentences really have a situational referent in the real world. Although it does not create total ungrammaticality, it can be seen in (17) that an undefined or non-specific subject creates semantic unfamiliarity, if all the assertive and modalizing properties already described here are considered. In fact, the intention of these sentences to comment, criticize, opine, or regret does not seem justifiable if the subject is not defined or mentioned. It obviously does not make much sense to comment or criticize an action done by an unknown entity, or without a specified referent in the situational-pragmatic context involving the speaker and the sentence with SVI<sup>17</sup>.

- (17) a. ?/# *Comeu um homem o bolo e afinal o jantar está pronto!*

Ate a man the cake and after-all the dinner is ready!

?/# 'A man ate the cake but the dinner is ready!'

- b. ?/# *Almoça uma senhora todos os dias no mesmo restaurante e hoje está fechado!*

Lunches a lady every-day at the-same restaurant and today [it] is closed!

?/# 'A lady lunches every day at the same restaurant but today it is closed!'

- c. ?/# *Gosta uma rapariga de morangos, e tu estás a comê-los todos!*

Likes a girl strawberries and you are eating-them all!

?/# 'A girl likes strawberries, but you are eating them all alone!'

<sup>16</sup> Got-lost she and I explained-her so-many times the way

?/# 'She got lost, but I explained the way to her so many times!'

<sup>17</sup> The cases of (10) may be exceptions to this rule, because it is easier to accept an undefined NP – e.g. *Queria uma moça falar contigo e tu foste-te embora?!; Foi um rapaz até Lisboa para tu não estares lá?!.* It seems to me that, here, the undefined NP used does not codify a generic value or an unknown entity; instead, it is a non revelation of the subject's identity by the speaker, although s/he knows who the subject is. The reference is, therefore, not lexically revealed.

d. ?/# *Está um belo dia de sol e está um jovem na biblioteca a estudar!*

[It] is a beautiful day of sun and is a young-man in-the library is studying!

?/# 'It is a beautiful sunny day, but a young man is in the library studying!'

e. ?/# *Estudou um aluno tanto para só sair metade da matéria no teste!*

Studied a student so-much for only appear half of-the syllabus in -the test!

?/# 'A student studied so hard, but only half of the syllabus was in the test.'

The only contexts of this kind in which this undefined nominal phrase and subject may be accepted are those where the pronouns “we” or “I” have a generic interpretation (although this works only with expressions like “*um homem*” [a man] or “*uma pessoa*” [a person]<sup>18</sup>). In those cases, the reference would be specific instead of abstract or undefined. The use of the phrase “*uma pessoa*” with a generic value is very common, but it is not undefined (because it generally relates to the pronoun “*eu*” [I]) in a context with inversion like *Tem uma pessoa tanto dinheiro para não ter onde o gastar!*<sup>19</sup>. Furthermore, as the subject of these sentences with SVI is mostly pronominal and deictic, this increases and shows the need for a situational reference.

#### 4. Exclamative or declarative Sentence Type?

The semantic-pragmatic properties of sentences with SVI, studied in the previous section, show the issue concerning the type of sentence, a consequence of being both assertions and comments. The confluence between the concepts of assertiveness and modality or modalization makes their behavior somewhat hybrid, concerning their exclamatory or declarative character, because they have properties of both types of

<sup>18</sup> It should be remember that in Portuguese these expressions may express the generic values of “we” or “I”, depending on the linguistic context in which they are used.

<sup>19</sup> Has a person so-much money for not having where it to-spend  
'Someone with so much money and nowhere to spend it on!'

sentence. This is the reason why I call them “declarative-exclamative” sentences.

An exclamative sentence is traditionally defined as a sentence that corresponds to an expressive illocutionary act, according to Searle’s (1969) speech act typology, and Mateus et al. (2003, 74) describe it as the illocutionary act that aims to “express the psychological state of affairs of the speaker specified in the content of the utterance”. Therefore, the sentences studied in this work clearly have exclamatory properties, since the primary intention, i.e. the justification for its use, is the expression of the speaker’s attitude. What determines the subject and verb’s positions is precisely that modalizing feature of the utterance.

However, some elements of the declarative clause’s definition may also coincide with these SVI sentences’ properties, namely their truth value. In a traditional theoretical framework, declarative sentences are considered as those whose interpretation pass through an evaluation of their truth value, knowing that, within a referential semantics perspective, their proposition is only true if their predication is certified in the real world, that is, if the state of affairs presented can be verified. Following all that was described in section 2 of this article, it can easily be perceived that a sentence such as *Comi eu o bolo e afinal o jantar estava pronto* (7a) has declarative features, as it can be analyzed through these same concepts of truth value, reference and assertiveness.

It seems then possible to state that the sentences analyzed in this paper have properties typically associated with exclamative sentences; they are comments, expressive speech acts that demonstrate the speaker’s attitude; they depend on the context and on the ability of the listener to interpret the implicit attitude; and they are clearly produced with an exclamatory intonation. However, they also have declarative features: they describe the world; they introduce new information into the speech; and they have an available truth value, thus being closer to assertive speech acts. While their assertiveness constitutes their own declarative properties, their role and their pragmatic features establish their exclamatory characteristics.

The definition of “declarative-exclamative” sentences is, then, closer to Andueza’s (2011) analysis of exclamative sentences, since the author considers that they are also assertive sentences because they express the speaker’s attitude at the same time as describing the world. Nevertheless, the declarative (assertive) properties of SVI sentences studied here justify that they are not exclusively considered as exclamatives: they are somehow closer to modalized declaratives. Indeed, their exclamatory tone and their dependence on conversational context bring them closer to pure exclamative sentences; however, the fact that they present these

commented situations, and that they do not depend so much on a presupposition or on an inference by the listener (as happens with *Que lindo dia!* [What a beautiful day!], which is a typical exclamative), justifies their more hybrid pragmatic status, and therefore the notion of “declarative-exclamative” sentences.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper, a special case of subject-verb inversion (SVI) from contemporary European Portuguese was analyzed, and was characterized as having a very specific semantic-pragmatic role in the sentences in which it occurs.

The semantic and pragmatic analysis of sentences such as *Comi eu o bolo e afinal o jantar estava pronto!*<sup>20</sup> or *Gosto eu de morangos e tu não me das nenhum!*<sup>21</sup>, has led to the understanding that the choice of using VSO order instead of the canonic SVO order turns the sentence’s meaning into neither a simple predication, nor a simple grammaticalization of an attitude: actually, it is at the same time an assertion and a comment. Its semantics does not limit itself to an implicit modal comment, neither in an implicative reading, nor even in a description of the world: these are sentences in which discursive modalization is represented by an assertion, since the subject of the enunciation presents the facts, and, at the same time, comments on them.

The construction of this modal assertiveness or assertive modalization involves meaning systems such as propositionality, reference (which is often deictic, and thus solved by the situational context), and time. But it mainly involves semantic-pragmatic systems of interpretation such as inference, presupposition, and implicature; these resort to semantic elements such as modal basis or ordering source, or to pragmatic elements such as common knowledge, factual circumstances or evidence, social conventions, or just the interpretative competence and the mutual knowledge of the participants in a conversation. All the pragmatic elements that surround the production of sentences with SVI allow us to interpret the assertive and modal usage of this syntactic strategy, and to assume that these sentences are both expressive and assertive speech acts. In order to understand what is mentioned about a proposition *p*, the listener must evaluate its predication and its pragmatic features – if only

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. (7a) for translation.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. (9b) for translation.

one of them is chosen, it will definitely lose one of the values that SVI gives to the sentence it integrates.

To conclude a study that aims mostly to understand the interaction between syntax and semantics in qualifying this process of sentence construction in Portuguese, I will also present sentences such as (18) and (19).

- (18) a. *E tenho eu* ainda tanto trabalho para fazer!  
 And have I still so-much work to do!  
 ‘I still have so much work to do!’ (when I wanted to go on vacations so badly!)
- b. *E fui eu* ver aquele mau filme!  
 And went I to-watch that bad movie!  
 ‘And I went to watch that bad movie!’ (when it would have been so much better to watch that Oscar winning movie!)
- c. *E é o Pedro* tão inteligente e aplicado!  
 And is the Pedro so intelligent and methodical!  
 ‘Pedro is so intelligent and studious!’ (and he had that awfully low grade!)
- (19) a. *Quer ela* ser escritora!  
 Wants she to-be [a] writer!  
 ‘And still she wants to be a writer!’
- b. (E) *vai o João* viajar!  
 (And) will the João travel!  
 ‘And still João is travelling!’
- c. *E diz a Maria* que é rica!  
 And says the Maria that [she] is rich!  
 ‘And, in spite of it, Maria still says that she is rich!’
- d. *E pensava eu* que ia chegar a horas a casa!  
 And thought I that [I] would get on time home!  
 ‘I even thought that I would get home on time!’

These sentences are interesting because they present the inversion studied in this paper, and they seem to have some modalizing and exclamatory intention; but there is also an ellipsis of the contrastive

proposition (the one that would represent the modal basis). That proposition, despite not being explicit, is still the cause of this inversion, and therefore the element which captures the essence of the attitude expressed in the clause. In these cases, it is substituted by an initial “e” [and], which is a discursive operator that allows its recovery, so that the attitude expressed in the sentences (and consequently their real meaning) can only be interpreted contextually.

This means that, as these sentences do not present all the modal basis, their intention can only be understood (and fully interpreted) if the listener has total access to the situational context in which they are uttered. The work of interpretation goes from analyzing these circumstances to inferring which contrastive proposition is not expressed, and what type of comment is implicit there. Thus, it is not only the comment that is implicit here, as happens with the examples (7) to (13) analyzed throughout this work, since it is also a part of the situational context that forms the basis of this comment. A listener can only understand it if s/he has access, live, to contexts like (20) and (21), where the inversion creates a contrast between what is said and the circumstances surrounding the production of the utterance.

- (20) (SITUATION: The speaker is chatting to a friend and comments that it is July already, and all his/her friends are on vacation, which gives him the desire to be on vacation too and to go to the beach with his friends):

a. *E tenho eu ainda tanto trabalho para fazer!*<sup>22</sup>

(SITUATION: The speaker has just left the movie theatre, where s/he watched a movie that s/he did not like, and his/her friend tells him/her that that evening another movie theatre in town was offering tickets to a session of an Oscar winning movie):

b. *E fui eu ver aquele mau filme!*<sup>23</sup>

(SITUATION: The speaker is telling someone that he just learnt that Pedro, his/her close friend and acquaintance of the listener, had a bad grade in a work that he had put a lot of effort into):

c. *E é o Pedro (tão) inteligente e aplicado!*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See (18a) for translation.

<sup>23</sup> See (18b) for translation.

<sup>24</sup> See (18c) for translation.



- (21) (SITUATION: The speaker finishes reading some texts written by his/her friend and s/he verifies that they had a lot of ungrammatical constructions and that they are not cohesive and coherent in the development of the ideas):

a. *Quer ela ser escritora!*<sup>25</sup>

(SITUATION: The speaker ends up knowing that João, his/her friend and also acquaintance of the listener, is afraid of flying but has still booked a trip to China.)

b. (E) *vai o João viajar!*<sup>26</sup>

(SITUATION: The speaker has just learned, because the listener told him/her, that Maria, his/her acquaintance, had to ask the bank for a loan to pay her college fees):

c. *E diz a Maria que é rica!*<sup>27</sup>

(SITUATION: Coming from a party, the speaker, who had promised his/her parents that s/he would be home at 11p.m., looks at his/her watch and notices that it is already 11.55p.m., and s/he remembers that s/he was late due to an interruption in the subway traffic):

d. *E pensava eu que ia chegar a horas a casa!*<sup>28</sup>

These last cases exemplify and reinforce the conclusion that the subject-verb inversion studied in this paper is more than a syntactic process: it is also a semantic-pragmatic process that specifically marks the speaker's attitude.

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<sup>25</sup> See (19a) for translation.

<sup>26</sup> See (19b) for translation.

<sup>27</sup> See (19c) for translation.

<sup>28</sup> See (19d) for translation.

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